

Message Text

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TAGS: PFOR, UR, CU, MX

SUBJECT: ECHEVERRIA COMMENTS ON CUBA, USSR

1. IN A JULY 6 PRESS CONFERENCE FOR FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS, PRESIDENT ECHEVERRIA SPOKE OF CUBA AS FOLLOWS.

2. THERE SHOULD BE A COMPLETE CHANGE IN "THE UNJUST BLOCKADE OF CUBA. IS THAT CLEAR?" "WE HAVE INTENSIFIED OUR COMMERCIAL RELATIONS WITH CUBA. WE ARE NOT INTERESTED IN POLITICAL LINKS OF ANY OTHER KIND." "IF THE US IS TRADING WITH THE USSR, WHY BLOCKADE CUBA?"

3. ON FREEDOM OF THE PRESS: ECHEVERRIA SAID THAT IN MANY COUNTRIES WRITERS ARE PERSECUTED. HE DEPLORED THIS: "IF THEY PERSECUTE WRITERS NOW, NEXT THEY WILL PERSECUTE JOURNALISTS." CUBAN CORRESPONDENT: "IN THE CASE OF DELINQUENTS WHO COMMIT CRIMES, THEY ARE JAILED BECAUSE OF THE CRIMES, NOT BECAUSE THEY ARE WRITERS". ECHEVERRIA: "WHAT MAKES YOU THINK I WAS ALLUDING TO YOU." ECHEVERRIA CONTINUED AT LENGTH IN THIS VEIN, EMPHASIZING THE DANGERS INHERENT IN PERSECUTION OF WRITERS AND THE PRESS, NOT ALLOWING THE HAPLESS CUBAN OFF THE HOOK.

4. IN A CONVERSATION MELEE CONCERNING NUCLEAR ARMS, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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A CUBAN CORRESPONDENT SAID THAT THE SOVIET UNION, THOUGH

IT HAD NUCLEAR ARMS, WAS NO THREAT TO THE THIRD WORLD
BECAUSE THE USSR "HAS NEVER COMMITTED AGGRESSION AGAINST
ANOTHER COUNTRY...". ECHEVERRIA: "NEVER?" THERE WAS A
CHORUS FROM WESTERN CORRESPONDENTS OF "WHAT ABOUT HUNGARY?
WHAT ABOUT CZECHOSLOVAKIA."

5. COMMENT: DESPITE ECHEVERRIA'S PLUGS FOR CUBA (I.E.
ELIMINATION OF THE "BLOCKADE", NET SCORE FOR THE CUBAN
SIDE WAS PROBABLY A MINUS BECAUSE OF ECHEVERRIA'S SINGLING
OUT THE CUBAN CORRESPONDENT AS TARGET FOR HIS SHARP
LECTURE ON FREEDOM OF THE PRESS.
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